

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6533

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S E C R E T VIENTIANE 7614

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, MCAP, EAID, LA

SUBJECT: T-28 SORTIE RATE FOR FY 75

1. I HAVE BEEN INFORMED BY THE DATT THAT HE HAS RECEIVED INFORMAL NOTIFICATION THAT THE 2,000/3,000 SORTIE RATE PROPOSAL WE HAVE SUBMITTED HAS NOT BEEN APPROVED AND THAT WE WILL BE REQUIRED TO MAINTAIN 60 OPERATIONAL T-28'S TO PERMIT A 4,000 SORTIE PER MONTH CAPABILITY. I AM VERY MUCH OPPOSED TO MAINTAINING THIS 4,000 SORTIE CAPABILITY WHICH I CONSIDER TO BE EXTRAVAGANT AND ILL-ADVISED.

2. THE BACKGROUND OF THIS QUESTION IS AS FOLLOWS. SECDEF GUIDANCE TO THE DAO FOR THE FY 75 LAOS MAP/MASF PROGRAM DIRECTED THAT A 4,000 T-28 SORTIE PER MONTH CAPABILITY BE RETAINED. AFTER EXAMINING THIS PROPOSAL IN LIGHT OF EXPERIENCE AND THE BEST EXPERTISE AVAILABLE, WE SUBMITTED A COUNTRY TEAM POSITION THAT A 1,000 SORTIE RATE PER MONTH WITH A SURGE CAPABILITY TO 3,000 WOULD BE SUFFICIENT. THIS WOULD REQUIRE A FLEET OF 35 T-28'S OPERATIONALLY READY AND 10 IN FLYABLE STORAGE AT UDORN. THE 10 IN FLYABLE STORAGE WOULD SNROVIDSWTHE SURGE CAPABILITY TO 3,000 SORTIES PER MONTH. TO MAINTAIN THE
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4,000 SORTIE PER MONTH CAPABILITY REQUIREMENT, HOWEVER,

60 T-28'S WOULD BE REQUIRED.

3. I AM ALREADY CONCERNED AT THE COST OF MAINTAINING THE RLAF IN THE OVERALL FY 75 PROPOSED BUDGET. AS SUBMITTED FOR A 50,000 MAN FORCE LEVEL, THE RLAF WILL RECEIVE \$47 MILLION OUT OF APPROXIMATELY \$76 MILLION. IF OUR PENDING RECOMMENDATION FOR A 60,000 MAN FORCE STRUCTURE AT THE START OF FY 75 IS APPROVED, THE TOTAL WILL BE APPROXIMATELY \$86 MILLION FOR THE ENTIRE BUDGET. I BELIEVE THAT SPENDING \$47 MILLION OUT OF \$86 MILLION FOR RLAF IS DISPROPORTIONATELY LARGE. IT MUST BE REMEMBERED THAT THE RLAF IS A FORCE OF ONLY 2,200 OFFICERS AND MEN WHILE THE REMAINING RLAF ARE COMBAT AND SUPPORT FORCES. OUR PROBLEM IS TO MAINTAIN AS EFFECTIVE A FIGHTING FORCE AS POSSIBLE TO PROVIDE THE PRIME MINISTER THE NECESSARY POLITICAL, MILITARY, AND ECONOMIC LEVERAGE TO ENSURE THE FORMATION OF THE PGNU AND ITS STABILITY DURING ITS FORMATIVE STAGES. THE PROPOSED T-28 INCREASE WOULD NOT ACHIEVE OR CONTRIBUTE TO THOSE ENDS. FURTHER, THE PROPOSED 4,000 SORTIE RATE WILL REQUIRE AN ADDITIONAL \$1.3 MILLION TO OUR SUBMITTED AND PROPOSED PROGRAMS.

4. I HAVE REVIEWED THE COMBAT SORTIE RATES, AND IN ALL OF FY 74 THERE HAVE BEEN ONLY 56 T-28 COMBAT SORTIES. INDEED DURING THE WHOLE WAR THERE WERE ONLY TWO MONTHS DURING WHICH THE 4,000 RATE WAS ATTAINED. I BELIEVE THAT OUR PROPOSED 2,000 SORTIE PER MONTH CAPABILITY IS MORE THAN SUFFICIENT.

5. I STRONGLY RECOMMEND THAT WE NOT EMBED OURSELVES IN A POSITION OF PROVIDING THE ROYAL LAO AIR FORCE WITH AN UNREALISTICALLY HIGH-COST CAPABILITY AND DRAIN OFF SCARCE MILITARY ASSISTANCE FUNDS THAT COULD BE MORE PROFITABLY USED FOR OTHER MILITARY ASSISTANCE PURPOSES. FINALLY, AN ADDITIONAL ARGUMENT FOR THE LOWER SORTIE LEVEL IS THE REDUCED FUEL CONSUMPTION WHICH WOULD RESULT.

6. I STRONGLY URGE THAT THE MISSION'S RECOMMENDATION ON THIS MATTER BE ACCEPTED.

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